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DAKOTA ZEPHYR

MAY, 1942

VOL. 7, NUMBER 2

Published by: The Soil Conservation Service
and S. D. Extension Service

Brookings, South Dakota

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Dear Cooperator:

Ways in which farmers and ranchers of South Dakota, are contributing to the total war effort of this country are a source of pride to the state and nation. Their response to war production goals, scrap iron collection, machinery repair, defense bond and stamp sales, show that farmers mean business in this war effort.

There are worthy examples of conservation farming also. More soil and moisture conservation practices are being established this year than in any previous period. There is a growing attitude that increased production goals can be more easily reached with a wider use of conservation practices.

Field reports from soil conservation districts and other areas indicate more land will be farmed on the contour this year in South Dakota than the total previously contoured in the state. Besides saving soil, farmers have obtained increased yields of crops by this practice. Sub-surface tillage which helps keep crop residue near the surface is more wide-spread. Strip cropping, grassed waterways, stocking pasture and range land to proper carrying capacity, storage of runoff water, and water spreading are other easily applied practices that are making much headway.

Although subsoil moisture is generally good, some people believe high winds this spring have already caused more topsoil erosion than any year since 1934. Local dust storms are more than gentle reminders of the need for erosion preventive measures. They are warnings that unless erosion is controlled, war production goals cannot be reached and we shall fall short on added demands certain to be made as the war advances. They also indicate a need for considering how to prevent further erosion during 1942 and 1943.

The AAA program encourages widespread adoption of easily applied conservation practices. Plans have been outlined with War Boards for coordination of activities in handling critical soil erosion areas that may develop during the year. Every soil conservation district in the state has more applications for technical assistance than at any time since its organization.

It all adds up to this: The need for farming the conservation way in South Dakota is paramount to conserve soil and moisture, meet production goals, and help win the war. Progress is being made but it can be increased tremendously.

Twenty-Seventh District Organized

Acreage in the 27 soil conservation districts now organized in South Dakota totals 6,709,400 acres. Of this 1,719,410 acres represent additions made on 21 occasions in nine districts. There are more than 14,000 farmers within district boundaries, or one-fifth of all the farmers in the state. Parts of 28 counties and three full counties are within district boundaries.

The last district organized was the Elm Creek-Midland district of 88,994 acres in Hand county. Joe Roalstad, Miller, and Wilbur Lingscheit, Ree Heights, are the appointed supervisors and an election was authorized for three more.

Additions to the Sioux-Brule, Lincoln, and Silver Creek districts were recently approved and referendums have been authorized on proposed districts in Beadle and Turner counties. Petitions have been filed with the State Committee for a proposed district to include the balance of Perkins county not within the Tri-County district, and another petition to include the rest of Brule county within the present Brule-Buffalo district. Hearings on these petitions will be held in May.

* * *

William Raabe, district supervisor in the Emanuel-Choteau Creek district, Sampson Thomas, cooperater in that district and chairman of the Bon Homme county war board, and Ralph E. Hansen, Extension soil conservationist, were heard over the Farm and Home Hour from Chicago during March. The program was carried by more than one hundred stations from coast to coast. The subject discussed was "Conservation in War Time." The broadcast told the story of soil and moisture conservation and the contributions of a good conservation program to the food-for freedom program.

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Water conservation raised yields 50 percent in New Mexico.

Soybeans Loosen Soil and

Lead to Serious Erosion

Many South Dakota farmers are going to plant soybeans this year to help with the war effort. A very important factor to consider in the planting of soybeans is that they loosen the soil and cause it to erode very readily. For this reason soybeans should be planted on flat land or planted on the contour on gently sloping fields.

Through the efforts of the war boards in the soybean area, the AAA, SCS, and Extension Service have made technical assistance available to any farmer who wished to have his field staked out on the contour. This will do much to reduce the erosion hazard and will serve as demonstrations of the value of contour farming in areas where the practice is not generally used.

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Contoured Corn Yields 40

Bushels While Other Only 20

Henry Halvorson of Trent farmed 65 acres on the contour last year for the first time. This year he had an additional 105 acres staked out for contour strip cropping. Mr. Halvorson is owner and operator of one of the Extension demonstration farms in Moody county and really believes in conservation farming.

And why shouldn't he? Here are some of the advantages he obtained last year from his contour farming:

Forty bushels of corn per acre compared with 20 bushels on an adjoining up and down hill field, Soil and moisture trapped on the hillsides, Time and fuel saving.

He had the irregular or buffer areas seeded to sudan grass for feed, but stated that even if these areas had produced nothing in his opinion the increased yield far exceeded the disadvantages of farming the small and odd shaped fields.

Selective Service for Every Acre

Selective service for our nation's manpower is well understood by everyone, but selective service for farm land is something new. Drafting men into the armed forces and industrial mobilization is only a part of the selective service system. Farmers and ranchers can step up their production and keep it up for the duration without soil wastage if they follow this selective service principle.

An inventory of every piece of land on the farm to find out what it can do, what kind of conservation practices it needs, etc., would enable the farmer to determine where his best cropland or pasture land is located, what should be planted to grass, what fields farmed on the contour, and where other conservation measures need to be used.

A farmer or rancher will be able to put his farm on a sounder, more productive and profitable basis by taking stock of his land and placing conservation practices into use where they will be beneficial. This will mean using the land best suited for crops and improving the less productive areas with grass and pasture.

This plan of selective service may reduce crop acreages, but it would not reduce total production. When the farmer takes his poorer lands out of cultivation, his yields naturally go up. With a few simple conservation practices such as contour farming and subsurface tillage, he can raise these yields even more. And when increased yields are added to the increased output from using every acre on the farm for its most productive purpose, then definite results are obtained and the first steps have been taken in meeting the production goals—by applying selective service to every acre.

Burn the south forty? Why? This is the question asked by W. Clinton Bourne, soils technologist located at Alcester. He proceeds to tell why burning is a bad practice:

Farmers are Fighting a Two-Front War Says A. E. McClymonds, SCS Conservator

Their advance into the new, high-g geared food production program is bringing more and more South Dakota farmers to realize that they, too, are in a two-front war. One front is the battle to raise production to levels never attained before, and do this in spite of reduced manpower and equipment handicaps that are natural handicaps of modern warfare. The other front is the struggle against subversive elements—wind and uncontrolled water—to keep production plants fit for the long pull, and do this even though most of the needed crops are allies of these elements, if not handled right.

Furthermore, most of South Dakota is subject to highly variable precipitation. So, farmers need to capture and hold as much moisture as possible to guard against dry spells.

There's the line-up. What's the attack? It's not a matter of plowing and planting more land.

Instead, it's a matter of getting the biggest return from a man's work; of getting the biggest yields for every foot the tractor runs, for every foot of earth the plow turns over, for every pound of seed; of farming the land best suited for crops and improving the poorer lands through hay production and pasture.

And that's conservation farming. High quality seed and good crop rotations on land handled in the way that will conserve moisture and soil, increased yields from the same land, keeping the production plant fit.

Burning destroys organic matter essential for good crop growth. Much nitrogen is in organic matter in the soil. When organic matter is burned, the nitrogen disappears. Lack of nitrogen necessitates manuring or the growing of sweet clover. Efforts to keep weeds down are well spent as the weedy fields are often burned.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

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- - -Brookings, South Dakota- - -
Official Business

A Soil and Water War-Time Message
From H. H. Bennett, Chief of the SCS

Agriculture's war aims are to increase production of essential materials now and to keep it up as long as may be necessary. Surest and most efficient way to reach these production goals is through soil and water conservation farming methods. Conservation practices on farms and ranches are helping to win the war in six vitally important ways. These are:

- (1) Increasing yields of fields, pastures, woods, and range;
- (2) Putting all kinds of land to best use;
- (3) Stopping waste of soil and water and maintaining productivity;
- (4) Increasing area of arable land and bringing into production idle and unused lands;

- (5) Doing everything possible to make sure needed goods will be produced on time;
- (6) Making sure production will be maintained for the full duration of the war with least possible soil damage.

Farmers are rendering their country the greatest service when they place crops on lands best suited to them. After the war, food, fiber, oils, wood, and plastics will be needed from farms in tremendous quantities, and millions will return to the land for a living. We've got to be ready for a long war and a huge job of feeding and rebuilding a war-torn world. We've got to be ready to run our agricultural plant at full capacity year after year. That means that we need all the ability and ingenuity we have to keep the plant in top-notch condition, running at peak efficiency with minimum wear and tear.